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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



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DENR-PCAPI, NAGSANIB-LINIS SA ESTERONG DIREKTA SA MANILA BAY

NAGSANIB puwersa ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at Pollution Control Association of the Philippines Inc. (PCAPI) upang linis ang maruming tubig ng Estero de Marala na direktang dumadaloy sa Manila Bay.

Napag-alamang ang Estero de Marala na may habang 2.7 kilometro ay matatagpuan sa boundary ng mga lungsod ng Navotas at Manila at nakaugnay ito sa Estero de Vitas sa timog (south), Estero de Maypad sa hilaga (north), at Estero de Maypajo sa silangan (east).

Sa memorandum of agreement (MOA) signing sa pagitan ng DENR at PCAPI, ipinunto ni

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu ang kahalagahan ng pagtutulungan ng national government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), local government units (LGUs) at komunidad sa isinasagawang rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay at ng iba pang daluyan ng tubig na diretsong dumadaloy sa makasaysayang baybayin.

Ayon naman kay PCAPI President Engr. Gretchen Fontejon-Enarle, ang pagbibigay ng proteksiyon sa kalikasan ay hindi lamang nakaatang sa gobyerno bagkus ay sa lahat ng stakeholders.

"This partnership signifies the importance, the essence of PCAPI, and hoping it will become a benchmark for other as-

sociations and organizations to do the same and take part in different environmental advocacies in order to address current environmental issues," ani Fontejon-Enarle.

Napagkasunduan ng dalawang partido sa MOA na palawakin ang programa upang mabawasan ang paglala ng kalagayan ng Estero de Marala at magkaroon ng ugnayan ang bawat isa para sa regular na pagpapalano, implementasyon ng mga napagkaisahan sa pagpupulong at matukoy ang bilang ng mga informal settler na naninirahan sa naturang lugar.

Nabuo ang pakikiisa ng DENR at ng naturang ahensiya sa pangangalaga ng Estero de Marala sa

ilalim ng programang Adopt-an-Estero ng DENR, na may layuning mapalakas ang pagtutulungan ng mga komu-

nidad malapit sa estero, donor partners, LGUs, DENR at iba pang ahen-siya ng pamahalaan. Kabilang din dito

ang pagtukoy kung kinakailangang magkaroon ng cleanup, dredging at desilting sa mga ilog bilang bahagi ng mga hak-

bang upang maibalik ang kaayusan at kalinisan ng Estero de Marala.

**BENEDICT
ABAYGAR, JR.**



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DOT eyes rehab, not closure of El Nido

The Department of Tourism (DOT) is pushing only the rehabilitation and not the closure to tourists of El Nido, Palawan, according to Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat.

Puyat told **The STAR** that the heads of an interagency task force composed of the DOT and Departments of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) would meet on Aug. 1 to come up with a decision on El Nido.

She was reacting to reports that the DILG is recommending the closure of Corong-Corong and Bacuit Bays in El Nido due to fecal coliform levels.

"The three of us are waiting for the

report (from the DILG and DENR), but the DOT side as of now, I'm only pushing for rehab," Puyat said.

The members of the interagency task force inspected El Nido and Panglao in November last year. Concerned local government units (LGUs) were given until last May to comply with environmental and easement laws.

Puyat said El Nido and Panglao are "too big to close."

She had earlier said the islands would be rehabilitated not with the same strict six-month closure implemented in Boracay, but through closer partnerships with LGUs.

— Catherine Talavera



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EL NIDO RESORTS ISASARA NG 3 BUWAN

MATAPOS ang Boracay ay ang ilang bahagi naman ng El Nido sa Palawan ang isasailalim sa rehabilitasyon ng pamahalaan.

Inirekomenda ng Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) ang three-month closure para sa Bacuit Bay at Corong-Corong Outfall dahil sa poor water quality sa nasabing mga lugar.

"It was found that Bacuit Bay and Corong-Corong Outfall are in dreadful condition with one outfall's fecal coliform level reaching more

than 3.4M MPN (most probable number)/100 ML," nakasaad sa dokumentong ipinalabas ng DILG sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at Department of Tourism (DOT).

Ayon kay Interior Undersecretary Epimaco Densing, inirekomenda ng ahensiya ang pagpapasara dahil nais malaman ng mga awtoridad kung saan nanggagaling ang maraming tubig. Aniya, ang ligtas na lebel ng tubig para sa swimming ay 100mpn lamang.

"This is compounded

by the presence of informal settler families, non-enforcement of easement regulations on outfalls, and unregulated dry-docking and mooring activities," nakasaad pa sa dokumento.

Partikular na nais ipagbawal ng DILG ang water activities upang mapangalagaan ang lugar at hindi magkasakit ang mga turista at local.

Ang Bacuit Bay ay kilalang puntahan ng island-hoppers dahil sa turquoise waters at mayamang marine life nito, habang ang Corong-Corong ay sikat sa luntiang kagubatan at sunset

views nito.

Ang Boracay ay muling binuksan noong October 2018 matapos ang six-month closure alinsunod sa kautusan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na i-rehabilitate ang isla, na tinawag niyang 'cesspool'.

Kalaunan ay inanunsiyo ng inter-agency task force ang plano nitong isailalim sa rehabilitasyon ang top Palawan destinations El Nido at Coron. Nauna na ring ipinasara ng environment officials ang ilang establisimiyento sa El Nido dahil sa paglabag sa environmental laws.

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PILIPINO
Mirror



El Nido up next in gov't cleanup drive

By CNN Philippines Staff

AFTER Boracay, portions of El Nido in Palawan are up next in the government's cleanup drive.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), in a document dated July 15 and released yesterday, has recommended a three-month closure for Bacuit Bay and Corong-Corong Outfall due to poor water quality in the areas.

"It was found that Bacuit Bay and Corong-Corong Outfall are in dreadful condition with one outfall's fecal coliform level reaching more than 3.4M MPN (most probable number)/100 ML," read the document, which was addressed to both the Environment and Tourism

departments.

Interior Undersecretary Epimaco Densing said the department recommended the closure as authorities aim to find out the source of the dirty water. The safe level for swimming is only 100mpn, Densing added.

"This is compounded by the presence of informal settler families, non-enforcement of easement regulations on outfalls, and unregulated dry-docking and mooring activities," the document further read. The Interior Department, in particular, wants to ban water activities "to preserve the area and prevent tourists and locals from contracting diseases."

Bacuit Bay is a popular destination for island-hop-

pers, as it boasts turquoise waters and rich marine life. Corong-Corong, on the other hand, is known for its lush forests and sunset views.

The move comes after a Tourism official earlier this month said there will be no more closure of tourist-laden island destinations, including El Nido and Coron in Palawan, Panglao in Bohol, and Siargao. Tourism Assistant Secretary Roberto Alabado had said that authorities will instead go after non-compliant resorts and establishments in the said areas.

Boracay reopened in October 2018 after a six-month closure on President Rodrigo Duterte's order to have the island, which he called a "cesspool," rehabilitated.

The inter-agency task force later on announced its plans to rehabilitate top Palawan destinations El Nido and Coron. Environment officials earlier shut down several establishments in El Nido after they were found violating environmental laws. *CNN Philippines' Carolyn Bonquin contributed to this report.*



Pagsasara ng ilang beach resort sa El Nido, Palawan inirekomenda ng DILG

INIREKOMENDA ng Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) ang pansamantalang pagsasara ng ilang beach resort sa El Nido, Palawan.
Ayon kay DILG Usec.

Epimaco Densing, nakasaad sa rekomendasyon ang pagpapasara ng hindi bababa sa tatlong buwan sa mga resort sa tatlong barangay sa Bacuit Bay at isang Barangay sa Corong-Corong.

Ito ay makaraang matuklasan ang mataas na fecal coliform levels sa tubig sa nasabing mga lugar.

Inirekomenda din ng DILG ang pagbuo ng inter-agency task force para sa El Nido kasama ang Department of Tourism (DOT) at Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).



Desalination: The future of water ?

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

IMAGINE this. An almost limitless supply of water for Metro Manila's 14-million-plus population with spare to boot for our city gardens, nearby farms and swimming pools.

Both companies were compelled to implement rotational water service interruption despite partially sourcing water from Laguna de Bay and deep wells, as the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) reduced water supply allocation coming from Angat.

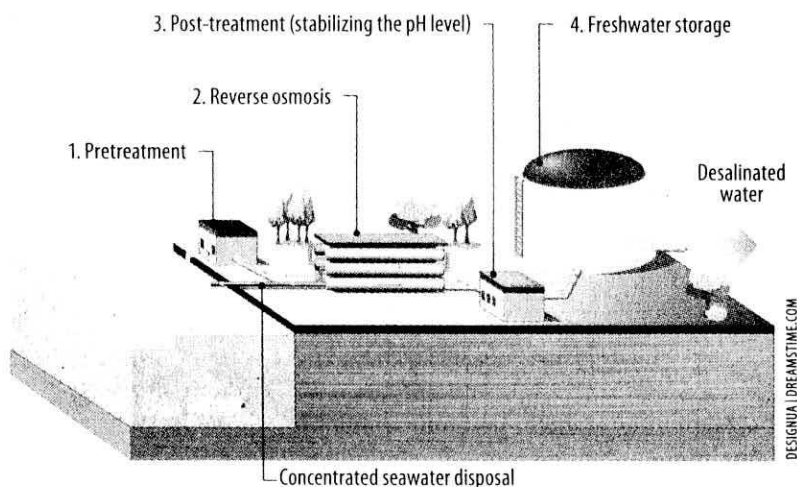
Because of the water supply shortage, concerned government officials have called on the public to conserve water and suggested rainwater harvesting for non-essential water uses to reduce the demand for clean water coming from Angat Dam.

Solutions, solutions, solutions

WHILE the Duterte administration, through the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), is developing various short-, medium- and long-term water source projects that can boost potable water supply for the ever-growing population in Metro Manila, the provision of water using an assortment of water-treatment technologies—for domestic, commercial and industrial uses—is gaining traction. One such technology, desalination, is becoming the buzzword.

One company is pitching the call for the adoption of desalination technology and tapping the country's unlimited supply of this precious economic resource from the ocean to provide adequate fresh water.

Through desalination, a process that takes away mineral components from saline or saltwater, the provision of fresh water, possibly tap or clean drinking water, however, is very expensive; hence also a lucrative undertaking.



DESALINATION PROCESS

The proposal to introduce water desalination to supply Metro Manila's growing need for the previous commodity cropped up at the height of a severe water crisis that plagued the Metro cities last summer.

But there's a catch. We may have to spend much more to enjoy the luxury of water abundance with the desalination option.

Rain dance

INFREQUENT monsoon rains over the past few days have started to increase the water level at Angat Dam, inching slightly above the critical level but still below the normal operating level.

As of 6 a.m. Tuesday, water at Angat was 161.56 meters—a good sign that the water shortage problem may soon come to pass. While it is now above the critical level of 160 meters, it is still way below the 180-meter normal operating level, which means residents of Metro Manila, with a population of over 12 million, will continue to experi-

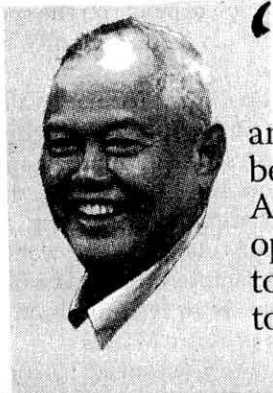
ence severe water shortage. More rains and water at Angat may soon reach normal operating level. The question is, how much longer?

Severe supply shortage

THE supply shortage this year is the worst the National Capital Region (NCR) has experienced in recent years. First felt in the East Zone—the concession area of Manila Water Co. Inc. with about 6.8 million customers last March 6—the water supply shortage started to affect the close to 9 million customers of Maynilad Water Services Inc., which covers the West Zone Concession Area last month.



Desalination: The future of water? P-2



“Ultimately, we need to consider: Who will foot the bill for the investment and the extra costs? Will consumers be willing to pay for it [desalination]? Are they also willing to explore other options that are within their means to address? And do they have access to these options?”

ENGR. ANTONIO TOMPAR

President and chief executive officer of Mactan Rock Industries Inc.

It entails the use of more energy, the steady supply of which remains a big challenge for the Philippines.

Extremes: Supply shortage, excessive rainfall

ARTURO TAHUP, associate for low carbon communities of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC), said cities will always have to grapple with how to meet their water needs.

“In the case of Metro Manila, we are facing both extremes—people do not have enough water flowing into their faucets, yet an hour’s worth of continuous rain will cause flooding.”

According to Tahup, beyond securing the limited supply of fresh water, people need to improve the management of demand.

“Water usually flows out of the faucet then goes directly to the drains and ends up in sewerage, untreated—this illustrates not only the gravity of our wastewater problem but also an opportunity to improve our management of demand,” he said.

Expensive, unaffordable—DENR exec

FOR the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), while the technology is already available, desalination is something that needs further study.

Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, deputy spokesman of DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, said the cost of producing desalinated water will be burdensome to consumers who would surely shoulder the cost of production.

“Desalination means money. It requires a huge amount of money. You will only make the people of the Philippines poorer because it is expensive,” said Antiporda, also DENR’s undersecretary for solid waste management and local government unit concerns.

Instead of pushing for desalination, Antiporda said he is keen on rainwater harvesting to mitigate the effect of water supply shortage and, at the same time, put in place a flood-control measure that has become a perennial problem in low-lying areas.

“What we need is to build water-impounding facilities in vacant areas to harvest rainwater,” he said.

For instance, Antiporda said spaces like road crossings can be developed for water impounding underneath these.

“By harvesting rainwater, we’ll reduce the pressure on Angat and we’ll have plenty of water to use,” he said.

‘Ripe for the taking’

SOUGHT for comment, Engr. Antonio Tompar, president and chief executive officer of Mactan Rock Industries Inc., a pioneer in desalination, said that the techno-

logical advance in water treatment through desalination is already ripe and may yet provide a lasting solution to the perennial water shortage in Metro Manila and other parts of the country.

Cebu, a province facing severe shortages in the future, is now a leading consumer of desalinated water, Tompar said.

The Mandaue, Cebu-based firm is one of the leading water-technology solution providers in the country.

Its biggest water system is a 22,000-cubic-meter per day (CMD) seawater facility in South Road Properties in Cebu City that supplies SM Seaside and City de Mari of Filinvest.

The company offers “build, own, operate and manage,” or BOOM, scheme to institutions or private and exclusive subdivisions, or “bulk water” supply to water districts.

Gaining traction

TOMPAR said desalination is gaining traction not only Cebu but in other areas where water scarcity or supply shortage is a problem, citing three big projects lined up in Manila.

“I have more projects now in desalination,” he said. He confided that when the company started desalination way back 25 years ago, it required around 5 kilowatts of electricity to desalinate 1 cubic meter of seawater. “Now as a standard, it is half of that, [and] in some cases, less than 2 kilowatts is enough,” he said.

Tompar plans to seek an audience with Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi to discuss how the cost of desalination can be further reduced.

He said there are power companies that are willing to work with the company “to give power at P6 per cubic meter.”

“I will ask him, through a letter of intent, to bring down the power cost,” he said.

Tompar noted the Philippines is surrounded by seawater and there are several hotels, some with shopping malls along bay areas like those in Cebu, that are already using desalinated water.

In Cebu, he said, groundwater is already contaminated by sewage, thus making desalination very feasible. “Come to think of it, desalination is now very competitive,” he added.

“In Mactan, conservatively, more than half of the water there



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is desalinated. In the bay area in Cebu, more than 50 percent is desalinated. In our company alone, we are producing about 30,000 cu. m. of desalinated water," he said.

'Brackish' water desalination

TOMPAR said he is eyeing a project in Metro Manila where the company will turn brackish water, like that from Pasig River, into potable water. The desalination of brackish water will require less power, he said, compared to removing minerals from saltwater.

"One project we would like to do in Metro Manila is brackish water. It requires only one-half kilowatt per cu. m.," he said.

That means a lower cost of just P5 per cubic meter because brackish water's salinity is lower.

According to Tompar, some portions of Laguna de Bay have very low salinity. "We can already supply water from Laguna de Bay at very low prices," he said.

Mactan Rock, he added, is manufacturing its own desalination plants, which is why its cost is lower. "We pioneered this 30 years ago. Right now, we are just importing component parts that are not available in the Philippines [like] membrane, pumps.... But the structure, assembly, pipes and technology, we already have it. I am building more desalination [units] in the bay area not only in Mactan but in Metro Manila," Tompar stated.

Industry-wise, he said, some private companies also buy imported equipment but added that, modesty aside, "when it comes to open bidding when there are fair bidding chances for desalinated water supply, we will win. We are the lowest bidder."

Less pollution, less cost

ACCORDING to Tompar, government efforts to rehabilitate water bodies are important to reduce the cost of desalination, or any water treatment method, for that matter.

"In Laguna de Bay, Manila Water and Maynilad also have desalination. Sometimes, when the salinity is high, they do desalination," he said.

Given the opportunity or accessibility, he said water from Pasig River can be extracted by the firm, which will clean it up and put it in desalinated brackish water for industries.

"We are not going to supply it, I will make it potable but I will sell it as nonpotable for flushing CR, cleaning toilets, etc. Hotels now,

even in the Philippines, even those coming from MWSS, Maynilad and Manila Water, they don't declare it as potable. They give bottled water," he said.

With less pollution, in Laguna de Bay and Pasig River, desalination can provide cheap water, he said. "But water from Manila Bay will cost a little more than brackish." Nevertheless, he said, because of the need, three more big installations await near the bay, citing the company's offer for affordable water supply.

"We are cheaper by P10 per cu. m. by industry standard. We don't extract directly from the sea. We extract seawater from deep water near the sea. There are chemical pollutants' but the desalination process cleans it. I have several desalination projects in Manila. Our company's brackish bulk water costs only about P7.78 per cu. m.," he said.

Optimizing freshwater resources

ACCORDING to Tahup, desalination is one proposal among a range of options to consider in optimizing existing fresh water resources.

"Water desalination is not new, and technology will continue to improve and become energy- and cost-efficient. However, the country is also currently challenged in securing enough power, which large-scale desalination would require vast amounts of. In the meantime, water conservation, gray-water recycling and rainwater harvesting are already feasible and [are] practical options in urban areas such as Metro Manila," he said.

Whether or not desalination is a viable option depends on the specific context of each community, he pointed out.

Desalination, Tompar said, works in communities struggling with water scarcity, drought and salinization. However, he said, the cost implication and efficiency, as well as waste management, would need to be factored in should a decision be made to replicate it on a scale such as Metro Manila's.

"Ultimately, we need to consider: Who will foot the bill for the investment and the extra costs? Will consumers be willing to pay for it? Are they also willing to explore other options that are within their means to address? And do they have access to these options?" he asked.



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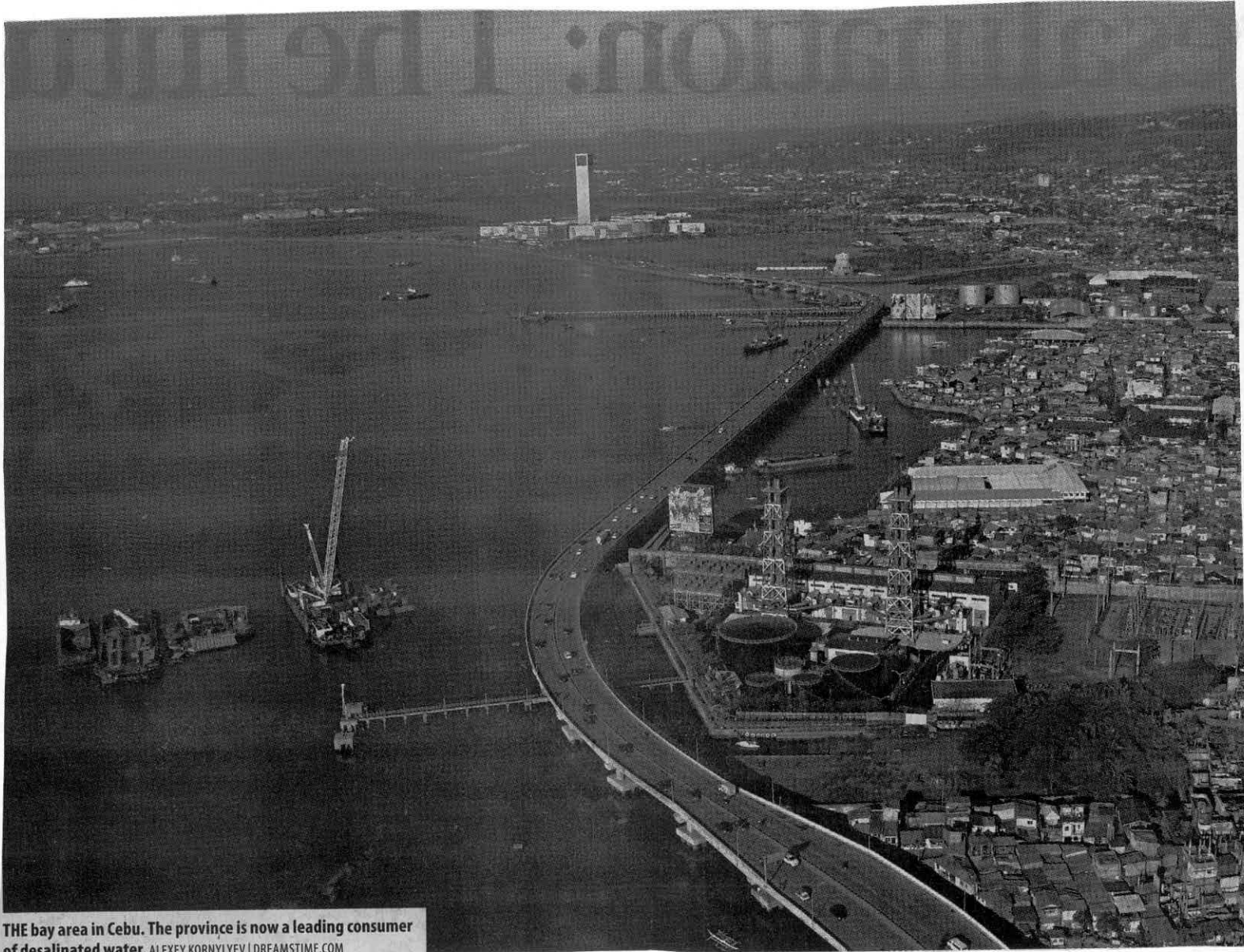
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Desalination: The future of water ?



THE bay area in Cebu. The province is now a leading consumer of desalinated water. ALEXEY KORNYLYEV | DREAMSTIME.COM



DENR INAUGURATES FIRST WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTER IN SOCCSKSARGEN

ISULAN, Sultan Kudarat: The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the Soccsksargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, General Santos City) Region, in partnership with the Sultan Kudarat State University (SKSU)-Lutayan Campus, on Wednesday formally opened the first Regional Wildlife Rescue Center at the SKSU Campus in Barangay Blingkong, Lutayan Municipality. Dr. Ali Hadjinasser, DENR-12 Conservation and Development Division chief, on Friday said that the facility is in compliance with Republic Act 9147 or the "Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act" to ensure the welfare of wildlife. The 2,500-square meter facility will also serve as a venue for public education and training ground for wildlife enthusiasts on handling, care and management of wildlife in captivity within Region 12.

JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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A 'win-win' approach to tapping SCS resources

THE clashing claims of the Philippines and China in the South China Sea (SCS), particularly in the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Philippines which we have renamed West Philippine Sea, continues to dominate public discussions.

In his State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday, President Duterte reiterated that he has an agreement with China President Xi Jinping allowing Filipinos and Chinese to fish in the disputed waters. He cited the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague allowing fishermen of various nations to fish at Panatag which is within our EEZ, as it is a traditional fishing ground.

"The Vietnamese, the Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, even Koreans, and Filipinos," Malaysians, and Indonesians – they can also fish because they have always been there," Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said after critics questioned the President's verbal agreement with China, insisting that only Filipinos should be allowed to fish in the Philippine EEZ.

Many critics have suggested that the Philippines take a cue from Vietnam's tough approach in dealing with China. In 1974, the South Vietnamese navy clashed with Chinese naval forces in the Paracels for control of one area, resulting in one Vietnamese warship sunk, three damaged, 53 Vietnamese soldiers killed, and 48 taken prisoner. In 1988, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam navy clashed with Chinese forces in the Spratleys and suffered 64 killed, 11 wounded, 9 captured, two transporters sunk, and one landing craft destroyed.

In recent years, Vietnam has been more subdued. In 2017, Petro Vietnam and the Vietnamese government engaged the Spanish company Repsol

in oil exploration and test drilling in disputed waters. China warned Vietnam it would take action to stop the drilling. Vietnam was later reported to have scrapped the project.

The problem arises from the fact that the two nations have conflicting claims in the South China Sea. Vietnam, like all other coastal states in the region, has a 12-mile territorial sea plus a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, as provided by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). But China does not recognize the UNCLOS; it claims instead sovereignty over 80 percent of the South China Sea, based on a nine-dash-line map it produced in 1948.

China's foreign ministry has stated that China's position on the South China Sea is "clear and consistent.... China resolutely safeguards its sovereignty and maritime rights." Any dispute with another country may be settled via negotiations and consultations, it said.

President Duterte has chosen to negotiate rather than fight like Vietnam once did. Vietnam has since joined the other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in agreeing to the drawing up of a Code of Conduct to guide the various nations surrounding the South China Sea, with the goal of preventing violent confrontations and settling disputes instead through consultations and diplomacy.

The Philippines and China will start later this year an oil exploration and development project in the Calamian area west of Palawan, with a 60-40 sharing agreement in favor of the Philippines. This is part of the win-win strategy that the Philippines has chosen in its dealings with China as they move to develop Asia's natural resources that have long been exploited by outside nations.



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Winning against black environmental issues



IN MY column last Saturday, I wrote about the black environmental issues—the climate emergency, the massive extinction of species already under way, large scale mining and big dam projects, and the destruction by China of the West Philippine Sea—that are threatening human well-being and the health of our planet and our country in particular. These problems, I said, are not just serious or catastrophic but existential. If we not address them urgently and effectively, we doom our planet, our country, and ourselves to a terrible future. But the reality that the black environmental issues pose enormous challenges does not mean we are helpless before them.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel to reverse environmental degradation. Magic bullets are not necessary to win against the black issues. What is needed are excellent science so we know what we are up against, imaginative thinkers who can provide us innovative and creative technical and policy solutions to the problems we are facing with, consensus building approaches that bring us all together to act united and collectively against the roots of the environmental crisis, strong political will so we can aim higher to truly solve the problems we are facing, and strong public and private institutions that can carry on the intergenerational work that needs to be done.

But underlying all of these must be a philosophy of integral ecology, as elaborated by Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si* that can guide and make coherent all our efforts. In that encyclical, the Pope emphasized that:

“Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion . . . We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsi-

bility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it. We have had enough of immorality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty. It is time to acknowledge that light-hearted superficiality has done us no good. When the foundations of social life are corroded, what ensues are battles over conflicting interests, new forms of violence and brutality, and obstacles to the growth of a genuine culture of care for the environment.”

Pope Francis then quoted Saint Therese of Lisieux who “invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship.” This is what integral ecology is made up of: “Simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms.”

“Let us accept our inter-generational responsibility.”

The latest pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines entitled “An urgent call for ecological conversion, hope in the face of climate emergency” provides the elements of such an approach:

“The Earth is our home. We are to care for our common home. We are to act in order to protect all life forms on Earth, from ridge to reef . . .

We are connected to the Earth, just as our lives and the life of all other beings are interconnected with each other.”

The CBCP also commits to the following concrete ecological actions:

“1. Integrate the care of creation as our common home in our teaching and practice of Christian discipleship.

Turn to A5

(Psalm 8:4-9)

2. Live simply, minimize consumption and actively promote ecological awareness and action through integral waste segregation and by minimizing the use of plastic and paper, by eliminating single-use plastics, polystyrene and the like, from our homes and institutions.

3. Prevent and reduce biodiversity loss by growing indigenous plants and trees, expanding forests through rain forestation, resisting destructive mining, dirty energy, the unbridled construction of roads and dams, as well as projects that cut into forested and protected areas. Implement programs that will allow the growth and recovery of forests, ecosystems and biodiversity.

4. Promote diversified and sustainable agriculture. Avoid the genetically modified agricultural products propagated in plantations and monoculture production, which destroy biodiversity and threaten indigenous lands.

5. Participate in efforts to protect and preserve our seas, oceans and fishery resources.

6. Protect our watersheds while at the same time using fresh water wisely, promoting and establishing massive rain-water collection, and putting a stop to infrastructures that can be detrimental to the preservation of ecological balance and biodiversity.

7. Push for an immediate transition to safe, clean, and affordable energy. Ensure just and fair transition to renewable energy sources and reject false solutions; support the use of solar power in our homes and institutions (dioceses, churches, schools, seminaries); pro-



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Winning against black environmental issues

mote, advocate and invest in renewable energy (solar, hydro, wind and geothermal power); join the campaign to immediately phase out coal-fired power plants and all other plants dependent on fossil-fuel, including coal mining.

8. Do not allow the financial resources of our Catholic institutions to be invested in favor of coal-fired power plants, mining companies and other destructive extractive projects. Divestment from such investment portfolios must be encouraged.

9. Integrate Laudato Si in the curriculum and strategic plans of Catholic educational institutions including seminaries and religious formations. Popularize and integrate the understanding of climate change and its mitigation in our formation programs.

10. Organize and educate people into a well-informed and empowered citizenry using all means available including mainstream and social media platforms for the passage of into law of bills aimed at protecting our common home, such as the Rights of Nature Bill, Forest Resources Bill, Alternative Minerals Mining Bill and National Land Use Act, as well as the implementation of environmental laws, such as, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act. In the initiatives to amend the 1987 Constitution, any move that poses a threat to the integrity of creation, justice and peace, should be opposed.

11. Network with international bodies to create a groundswell of worldwide pressure powerful enough to convince multinational institutions to lower emissions and to actively engage in environmental actions for the protection of our common home and on behalf of the poor who are most threatened by aggressive

but irresponsible industries.

12. Respect, recognize, and support the rights of indigenous peoples in protecting their ancestral domains and promoting sustainable development.

13. Strengthen adaptation measures and disaster risk management and reduction for our vulnerable communities. Advocate the prioritization of government budget allocation for climate resilient adaptation programs.”

Transformation must be happen at all levels—global, national, local, community, corporate, family, and individual. One can see this happening for example in the issue of plastic where there is an emerging consensus that a global ban on single use pf plastic is both necessary and doable, and where parliaments and other legislative bodies, including local councils, are adopting measures in support of such a ban. But without the active support of the private sector and a commitment by families and individuals to reject the familiar the effort will not succeed.

This transformation can happen if we accept our intergenerational responsibility. Again, I quote from Pope Francis: “Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.”

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Editorial

Congress should pass the Land Use Act

CONTRARY to a senator's view that the National Land Use Act (NLUA) works against the interests of local governments and should not be passed by Congress, this piece of legislation is a necessity for efficient, sustainable development throughout the country. President Rodrigo Duterte has repeatedly asked Congress to consider it a priority bill.

On Wednesday, Sen. Cynthia Villar rejected the call made by the President in his fourth State of the Nation Address (SONA) to pass the bill. She said that would unfairly remove the power to determine land use from local governments and provoke "the ire of all the mayors in the Philippines."

The proposed Act is currently stalled in the Legislature as House Bill (HB) 5240. The measure aims to resolve land use conflicts, mandate the formulation of land use plans at the national and local levels, and integrate and monitor developments on land use.

The NLUA creates a national land use authority to oversee a national land use plan that classifies land according to its use, such as infrastructure, agriculture and fisheries production, land conservation, residential developments, industrial or commercial developments and others.

The bill has been a legislative priority for both the Duterte administration and the previous administration under former president Benigno Aquino 3rd, who certified it as urgent in 2013. President Duterte has used the occasion of his SONA in three successive years to ask Congress to pass the measure, so far to no avail.

In his SONA this past Monday, Duterte urged Congress to urgently pass the NLUA this year to allow the country to "meet the demands of the investors coming in" and "serve as basis for the LGUs in crafting respective development plans and help disperse economic activities for the countryside."

For her part, Villar questioned the seeming contradiction between the administration's stated aim to decentralize the country and the centralization of land use policy.

"So we're going to remove the power from them and centralize it? No Congress will do that," Villar said.

This would seem to be a shortsighted view of the problem, because Congress has it within its power to modify the scope of any piece of legislation, the NLUA included. As lawmakers, it is the responsibility of congressmen and senators to craft a proper balance between national and local priorities, and in the case of the NLUA, that is precisely what Senator Villar and her colleagues should do.

The benefit of the NLUA is that it will establish a broad set of standards for land use. These will, in turn, provide a basis for the development of local land use plans, while still providing a level of consistency across the entire country. It is not necessary that the NLUA take away the discretion of local governments, and in fact it should be carefully designed to avoid that.

Local governments are in the best position to manage land according to local needs. A common foundation and set of benchmarks, however, helps to level the playing field for potential investors. This, in turn, works to the benefit of local governments by giving them all the same opportunity to attract investors, at least so far as the important factor of land management is concerned. Likewise, the NLUA will greatly facilitate development that straddles different local jurisdictions.

While Congress need not accept any land use framework from the administration at face value, it should reconsider its rejection of the NLUA, and pass the needed legislation as the President has asked.



EDITORIAL

Keeping commitments

TRUE to his mission, the guy has hit the ground running.

And he is bent on getting the job well done in record time.

Indeed, the essence of public service is speedy and favorable results or outcome.

And this is precisely what the gentleman from Eastern Visayas intends to deliver.

Thus, House Majority Leader Martin Romualdez has expressed high hopes that the House of Representatives will approve "in record time" about a third of the 26 priority measures, which were outlined by President Duterte in his 2019 State-of-the-Nation Address.

Romualdez said his optimism was bolstered by a meeting he had with House officials on how to hasten the legislative process.

"In compliance with the Speaker's directive to hit the ground running, I met House Secretariat officials involved in the committee and plenary deliberations of bills already filed. We discussed ways on how to expedite the approval of pending legislative measures from the committee level to plenary," he said.

"With the innovations that we are planning to implement in committee deliberations, I am optimistic that we can approve about a dozen of the President's priority measures in record time. Hopefully, the committee reports on these measures will be out for plenary deliberations by the first week of August," the Leyte lawmaker said.

Among these measures are the National Land Use Act; Department of Disaster Resilience; Coconut Levy Fund; TRABAHO bill; excise tax on alcohol products; property valuation; Capital Income Tax; Mandatory ROTC for Grades 11 and 12; Government Rightsizing bill; Energizing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises; National Transport Act; and Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Of these measures, Romualdez said only the National Transport Act and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission were not specifically mentioned by the President in his 2019 SONA.

However, the two measures were among the priority measures specified in the 2018 SONA, he said.

"All these measures are expected to face easy sailing in the committee deliberations as these were already approved by the House of Representatives in the 17th Congress," Romualdez said, citing Section 48 of the House rules.

Section 48 provides that: "In case of bills or resolutions that are identified as priority measures of the House, which were previously filed in the immediately preceding Congress and have already been approved on third reading, the same may be disposed of as matters already reported upon the approval of majority of the Members of the committee present, there being a quorum."

"Once constituted, the committees responsible for these measures may meet for just one session and immediately refer the committee reports for plenary deliberation. This is possible if they invoke Section 48 of the House rules," the Leyte solon said.



EDITORIAL

Isang 'win-win approach' para mapakinabangan ang yaman ng South China Sea

ANG nagkakatalong pag-aangkin ng Pilipinas at China sa South China Sea, partikular ang 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) ng Pilipinas na pinalitan ng pangalan bilang West Philippine Sea, ang patuloy na nangingibabaw sa mga talakayan.

Sa kanyang State of the Nation Address (SONA) nitong Lunes, muling binanggit ni Pangulong Duterte na may kasunduan siya kay China President Xi Jinping na nagpapahintulot sa mga Pilipino at mga Chinese na mangisda sa pinag-aagawang katubigan. Binanggit niya ang naging desisyon ng Permanent Court of Arbitration sa The Hague na nagpapahintulot sa mga mangingisda ng iba't ibang bansa na makapangisda sa Panatag na nasa loob ng ating EEZ, bilang ito ay isang tradisyunal na pangisdaan.

"The Vietnamese, the Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos, Malaysians, and Indonesians – they can also fish because they have always been there," pahayag ni Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana matapos kuwestiyunin ng mga kritiko ang berbal na kasunduan ng Pangulo sa China, at paggigiti na tanging mga Pilipino lamang ang dapat na magkaroon ng karapatan na mangisda sa EEZ ng Pilipinas.

Maraming kritiko ang nagmumungkahi na dapat gayahin ng Pilipinas ang matapang na posisyon ng Vietnam sa pagkikipagkasundo sa China. Noong 1974, nakipagdigma ang South Vietnamese navy sa puwersa ng Chinese naval sa bahagi ng Paracels para sa pagkontrol ng isang lugar, na nagresulta sa paglubog ng isang Vietnamese warship, tatlo ang napinsala, 53 sundalong Vietnamese ang napatay, at 48 ang binihag. Noong 1988, nagkaroon ng sigalot sa pagitan ng Socialist Republic of Vietnam sa puwersa ng China sa Spratlys at nagdusa ang 64 na nasawi, 11 nasugatan, 9 na binihag, dalawang pinalubog na barko, at isang nasirang eroplano.

Sa mga nakalipas na taon, naging mas tahimik ang Vietnam. Noong 2017, nakipagkasundo ang Petro Vietnam at pamahalaan ng Vietnam sa isang Spanish company, ang Repsol, para sa isang oil exploration at test drilling sa pinag-aagawang bahagi. Nagbanta ang China sa Vietnam na magsasagawa ito ng hakbang upang mahinto ang drilling sa lugar. Kalaunan, napaulat na ibinasura na ng Vietnam ang nasabing proyekto.

Lumitaw ang sigalot mula sa katotohanang may pinag-aagawan ang dalawang bansa sa South China Sea. Ang Vietnam, tulad ng lahat ng mga bansang may baybayin sa rehiyon, ay may 12-mile territorial sea dagdag pa ang 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, bilang itinadhana ng UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Ngunit hindi kinikilala ng China ang UNCLOS; sa halip, iginigiti nito ang karapatan sa higit 80 porsiyentong bahagi ng South China Sea, base sa isang nine-dash-line na mapa na inilabas nito noong 1948.

Inihayag ng foreign ministry ng China, na ang posisyon ng kanilang bansa sa South China Sea ay "clear and consistent... China resolutely safeguards its sovereignty and maritime rights." Anumang sigalot sa anumang bansa ay maaayos sa pamamagitan ng negosasyon at konsultasyon, anila.

Pinili ni Pangulong Duterte na makipagnegosasyon sa halip na lumaban tulad nang dating ginawa ng Vietnam. Nakiisa na ang Vietnam sa Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) sa pagsang-ayon sa pagbuo ng isang Code of Conduct upang maging panuntunan ng mga bansa na nasa paligid ng South China Sea, na may hangaring maiwasan ang marahas na komprontasyon at pagsasaayos ng gulo sa halip na sa pamamagitan ng konsultasyon at diplomasiya.

Nakatakda nang simulan ng Pilipinas at China ngayong taon ang isang oil exploration at development project sa bahagi ng Calamian sa kanluran ng Palawan, na may 60-40 na bahagian pabor sa Pilipinas. Ito ay bahagi ng "win-win" na estratehiya na pinili ng Pilipinas sa pakikipagkasundo nito sa China sa kanilang hakbang upang mapaunlad ang natural na yaman ng Asya na matagal nang pinagsasamantalahan ng bansa sa labas nito.


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COMMENTARY

SOVEREIGN STATES CAN SHARE THEIR SOVEREIGN RIGHTS

By Harry L. Roque Jr.

Former Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario and former Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales released a statement saying that no public officer, even the President, can share what international law provides is the exclusive right to explore and exploit natural resources, known in international law as sovereign rights. With all due respect to the two, I disagree.

For starters, the fact that the scope of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is 370 kilometers (200 nautical miles) from a country's basepoint or baselines makes it inevitable for countries to have overlaps in their EEZs. In the case of the Philippines, we have overlaps with China up north, given that Taiwan is only a stone's throw away from our northernmost island; with Palau on the east, with Malaysia and Indonesia in the south, and with China in the west, the subject of dispute between the five

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claimant states to the islands and waters of the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos), these overlaps must be resolved through "agreements" initially. Thus far, we have reached a delimitation treaty only with Indonesia.

Like all Filipinos, I would like to see similar delimitation treaties in all other areas with overlaps, although a multilateral treaty between claimant states is the ultimate solution to the WPS disputes. Pending conclusion of such "agreements," states and because of their sovereignty, defined by political scientists as the "totality of all powers that a state may exercise," can agree on provisional agreements with their neighboring states, including those that provide for joint fishing in the EEZ. This is not prohibited.

In international law, what is not prohibited is allowed.

Legal basis

In the Philippines, the legal basis for this is the ponencia of former Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban in the case of *Angara vs Tañada*. In upholding the validity of the country's accession into the World Trade Organization which literally, and as correctly pointed out by the petitioners, violated the literal provision of our Constitution providing for a "Filipino First" policy, our Supreme Court ruled that the Philippines may voluntarily surrender part of its sovereignty when it enters into a treaty or an international agreement: "a portion of sovereignty may be waived without violating the Constitution, based on the rationale that the Philippines adopts the generally accepted principles of international law as part of the law of the land and adheres to the policy of ... cooperation and amity with all nations One of

the oldest and most fundamental rules in international law is *pacta sunt servanda*—international agreements must be performed in good faith."

The rationale for such a limitation was also explained in the Panganiban ponencia: "The underlying consideration in this partial surrender of sovereignty is the reciprocal commitment of the other contracting states in granting the same privilege and immunities to the Philippines, its officials and its citizens."

Ultimate interpreter

Where therefore the President as chief architect of our foreign policy deems it to the national interest to engage in joint fishing in our EEZ with any other country through an international agreement, such an agreement is constitutional, simply put, because the Supreme Court as ultimate interpreter of our Constitution has ruled so.

Quite a number of countries have in fact entered into joint

fishing agreements not just over their EEZs but also even in their internal waters and territorial seas, both of which are subject to full sovereignty.

Joint patrol agreement

In our own region, China and Vietnam have for the past 15 years implemented a joint fishing and patrol agreement over the Gulf of Tonkin, whose waters are characterized as internal waters. This is proof that because of their inherent sovereignty, states can share natural resources even if their exploration and exploitation pertains to the states exclusively.

International practice also shows that state parties to the Unclos have entered into joint fishing agreements in their EEZs, including those which overlap with other states. Examples of these agreements include those between Japan and Taiwan, Norway and the European Union, the European Union and Morocco, the European Union and West African states, and be-

tween China and the East and West African states.

Foreign mining firms

The Supreme Court in *La Bugal B'Laan Tribal Association vs the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources* secretary has allowed the participation of foreign mining companies in our mining industry.

Said the court through the ponencia again of former Chief Justice Panganiban: "As written by the framers and ratified and adopted by the people, the Constitution allows the continued use of service contracts with foreign corporations—as contractors who would invest in and operate and manage extractive enterprises, subject to the full control and supervision of the state—sans the abuses of the past regime. The purpose is clear: to develop and utilize our mineral, petroleum and other resources on a large scale for the immediate and tangible benefit of the Filipino people."

If foreigners can engage in


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Sovereign states can share their sovereign rights

mining in our land territory subject to our full sovereignty, more so in an area which is subject only to sovereign right, that is where we have given our consent. The fact that the former Ombudsman is against the policy of joint fishing in the EEZ is understandable. She wrote a dissenting opinion in the La Bugal case.

All told, there is hence no legal impediment for the President to enter into an executive agreement to engage in joint fishing with China in our EEZ provisionally, or until our territorial dispute with the latter should have been settled with finality. —CONTRIBUTED INQ

(The author served as spokesperson for President Duterte from October 2017 to October 2018, and is president of the Asian Society of International Law. He taught public international law and constitutional law in the University of the Philippines College of Law for 15 years before being elected to the House of Representatives in 2016.)



ECOTOURISM IN AMSTERDAM

WHERE TOURISTS GET THE THRILL OF FISHING FOR PLASTIC

AMSTERDAM—Equipped with fishing rods and thick gloves, a group of people peers into the water from one of the many boats that line Amsterdam's famous canals.

But it's not fish they're hunting on their cruise along one of the Dutch capital's most famous tourist attractions. It's plastic.

With ecotourism booming around the world, the canal cruises run by the Dutch group Plastic Whale are reeling in big business.

"It's a completely other way of visiting Amsterdam," Plastic Whale founder Marius Smit told Agence France-Presse (AFP). "Obviously you're on the beautiful canals of Amsterdam in a really nice boat, but at the same time you're active as well, and you add something positive to the canals and to the city because you're making it cleaner."

Smit set up the company eight years ago, aiming to create "economic value" from the

plastic waste the tours dredge from the canals.

Plastic bottles are separated from the rest of the trash and are then recycled to be used in office furniture or in building more Plastic Whale boats.

In 2018 the Plastic Whale cruises, which also run in the port city of Rotterdam, drew 12,000 visitors and this year they expect more, Smit said.

On a hot summer's morning, seven people are lined up on the bright green boat decorated with smiling whales.

Pineapples and shoes

Angela Katz, an Australian who has lived in Amsterdam for just over a year, is on her second tour, after learning about the cruises through Facebook.

"I really enjoyed it but also it's really eye-opening just how much rubbish there is in the canals," said the 51-year-old graphic designer, fishing rod in hand.

During the two-hour tour



CRUISE FOR A CAUSE Volunteers use fishing rods to collect plastic from one of Amsterdam's famous canals. A foundation has organized an event to make the canals plastic-free. —AFP

they fish out a bizarre range of objects, including various shoes, ski gloves, bleached-out soda cans, wine bottles, a nappy and even a whole pineapple.

"I think the Netherlands has an image of being very environmentally friendly so it is sur-

prising," added Katz, who brought her husband on the cruise as well as two friends and their three children who were visiting Amsterdam.

One of those friends, Guy O'Loughnane, from Vancouver in Canada, said he was particu-

larly surprised by the amount of "stuff that is not even used," such as unopened bottles.

Last year, the thousands of amateur fishermen on Plastic Whale's boats collected 46,000 plastic bottles, Smit said.

"And for every bag of bottles that we take out of the canals, we take out two or three bags of other kinds of materials," he added.

'Tourists aren't careful'

Plastic in the sea, rivers and other waterways is a problem around the globe, causing harm to marine ecosystems.

Just how much plastic is in the canals of the city dubbed the Venice of the North is hard to estimate, but solutions are easier to find.

"Tourists aren't careful," said Katz as she stands in front of a pile of rubbish.

Smit said, however, that despite the growing strain on Amsterdam from huge numbers of

tourists, local residents are also "careless with their own waste."

'Combination of factors'

"It's a combination of factors," he said, explaining that the city's bins fill up more quickly because of the numbers of tourists, and then people simply place their rubbish beneath them. "So before you know it there is a lot of waste on the streets, then it begins to rain or the wind begins to blow and it rains or blows into the canals."

Amsterdam is increasingly a victim of its own success, with its canals, architecture and notorious red light district attracting around 18 million visitors last year, more than the entire population of the Netherlands.

The Plastic Whale tours are part of a growing trend, with Amsterdam authorities separately launching a series of initiatives to direct tourists to alternative activities and ease the pressure on the top sites. —AFP



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ANGAT DAM BUMABA ULIT

BAHAGYANG bumaba muli ang antas ng tubig sa Angat dam kahapon.

Ito ay sa kabila ng naranasang malakas na ulan sa bahagi ng Bulacan Huwebes ng gabi.

Batay sa tala ng Pagasa Hydrology Division alas-6 ng umaga ng Biyernes ay nasa 161.22meters ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat dam na mas mababa sa 161.35 meters kamakalawa.

Samantala, nadagdagan naman ang water level sa La Mesa dam na nasa 73.92meters kahapon.

DWIZ882

ang kanilang intelligence network.

Bukod dito ay mga mobile at stationary checkpoint na nakatalaga

ang NCRPO sa mga istratihikong lugar at higit

pang pinaigting ang police visibility sa mga lansangan. **VERLIN RUIZ**



ESSAY

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Closing the loop: Freeing the sea from marine debris

BY SHERRY ANN GOCHECO

FOR three days a week, I see garbage collectors loading up garbage trucks with heavy loads of trash.

Witnessing that scene every week makes me think: What if each home refused to take in things that they didn't really need? What if they reduced their waste and reused things that can still be recycled? What if they practiced composting their biodegradable waste?

Surely, the waste collected every week would significantly be reduced. Cutting down on waste not only lessens the amount of trash ending up in landfills, but it also helps reduce pollution and garbage that ends up as marine debris.

Following the 5Rs — refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle and rot — is not easy. It calls for great effort and perseverance, as it veers away from what society is accustomed to.

Luckily, I was able to take part in Closing the Loop: Opportunities for Collaboration, an event organized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) on May 2019, which aimed to address the problem of

marine debris.

During the occasion, I learned how I could tap into business and government projects that seek to reduce the production of waste products.

Each of the three sectors — business, government and NGOs — shared their efforts in reducing marine wastes. The audience was also given the opportunity to learn further from the presenters through the question and answer session.

The presentations opened my eyes to the problems around me and the steps being taken to address them. While the groups did remarkable changes in their circle of influence, I realized that those were still not enough.

A collaboration of efforts in getting the work done is imperative to close the loop.

We have a long way to go, yet so little time to do anything. But we must not falter; instead we should work together in reversing the environmental damages we brought upon ourselves.

There is strength in numbers, they say, and it is a good thing that we don't have to look far to make a collective difference. We can start just as where

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Essay

Closing the loop: Freeing the sea from marine debris



'The Closing the Loop: Opportunities for Collaboration' was organized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and nongovernment organizations to help address the issue of marine debris. HARIBON PHOTO

we are — be it at home, school or work. The difference we seek could also come in the form of supporting people

and institutions that push for effective preservation of our environment. The clock is ticking. There is no better

time to start but now. The author is a member of the Haribon Foundation.



OceanaGold set to elevate injunction plea to higher court

By Othel V. Campos

AUSTRALIA'S OceanaGold Corp. plans to elevate its plea for injunction to the Court of Appeals after the provincial court of Nueva Vizcaya denied the request of the company to end the unauthorized restraint of the Didipio operations by the local government.

Local government units of Nueva Vizcaya since July 1, 2019 denied access to and from the mine site in response to an alleged unlawful directive from the governor to 'restrain any operations' of the company.

Due to the depletion of consumable mining supplies, Didipio's underground mining has been suspended. Ore processing continues along with other critical activities to ensure the safety of employees and protection of the environment.

The company sought a renewal of

the Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in March 2018. The DENR allowed the miner to continue operations pending confirmation of the FTAA renewal.

The company said the authority over the Didipio Mine rested with the national government. The Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160), it said, did not grant the power or authority to the provincial governor or any local government officer to restrain any aspect of the Didipio operation.

The company continues to work with the national government to finalize the renewal of the FTAA and remains open to the opportunity to engage with the provincial government and work together in the best interest of the local stakeholders.

OceanaGold said it remained com-

mitted to operating in accordance with the law and would always comply with its responsibilities under the contract with the national government.

The Didipio Mine is an underground gold and copper mine located across the provinces of Quirino and Nueva Vizcaya.

The operation in the past decade received numerous awards. It is a two-time recipient of the Presidential Award as the most environmentally and socially responsible mining operation in the Philippines and was awarded the first Asean Mineral Award for best practices in sustainable development.

It is considered one of the safest gold mining operations in the world. The company over the past two years implemented a state-of-art automated and digital underground mining technology.



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Nueva Vizcaya pinaboran ng korte vs open-pit mines

BAGUIO CITY – Ibinasura ng korte ang petisyon ng mining giant na OceanaGold Philippines Incorporated (OGPI), isang foreign mining firm, na humihiling na ipatigil ang cease and desist order (CDO) ng Nueva Vizcaya at Kasibu town governments sa Didipio open-pit mines.

Sa inilabas na desisyon kahapon ni Judge Paul Atolba Jr. ng Regional Trial Court Branch 30, sinabing walang sapat na ebidensya na sumusuporta na awtorisado ang OceanaGold na ipagpatuloy ang mining operations nito sa lugar habang nakabinbin ang renewal ng kanilang Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) na napaso noong Hunyo 20.

"There is no sufficient evidence on record to support that OGPI is indeed authorized to continue mining operations pending the renewal of the President of the FTAA which would establish an unmistakable right to warrant the issuance of an injunctive relief," ayon sa korte.

Magugunita na binigyan ng permiso ng Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) ang OGPI noong Hunyo 20 na ipagpatuloy ang kanilang open-pit mining operations. Ang pagpapatuloy ng operasyon ng nasabing minahan ay kinondena ng mga residente at anti-mining groups kabilang ang Task Force on Indigenous Peoples (TFIP) dahil sa umano'y nakasira ito sa kalikasan, kabuhayan, kalusugan at luma-labag sa karapatang pantao. (*Artemio A. Dumlao*)



Reforestation, isinusulong

Nais ni Senator Pia Cayetano na matugunan ang problema sa kagubatan sa pamamagitan ng tuloy-tuloy na pagkalinga nito, katulad ng reforestation program.

Sa kanyang Senate Bill No. 284 (Sustainable Forest Management Act), sinabi ng senador na kailangan ang patuloy na programa para sa proteksyon ng kagubatan sa bansa.

Aniya, ang proteksyon ay bilang bahagi na rin ng suporta ng pamahalaan sa United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), kung saan lumagda ang bansa noong 2015.

Leonel M. Abasola

Building climate- and disaster-resilient communities

Second of two parts

BY the time this second part reaches the press, President Rodrigo Duterte has delivered already his fourth State of the Nation Address (SONA). Given the length of his address that could have lasted less than two hours, much of the accomplishments of the Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction may not have been enumerated.

With "Tatak ng Pagbabago" as the central theme of the pre-SONA forum in 2018, this year's pre-SONA focused on "Patuloy na Katatagan." In the first part published last week, we dealt with "Maagap na Pagtugon, Kaakibat sa Pagbangon and Kaalaman at Kahandaan." We complete today the Cabinet cluster's efforts in addressing the challenges brought by climate change.

Earthquake resiliency of Greater Metro Manila Area

Executive Order (EO) 52 created the Program Management Office for Earthquake Resiliency of Greater Metro Manila Area to ensure its full operation.

The resiliency directive intends to ensure the immediate availability of lifelines, addressing critical infrastructure and effective response mechanism.

Availability of lifelines would cover food, shelter and water. Stabilizing supply of safe food from primary production areas to the affected Greater Metro Manila markets is also addressed. A total of 44,410 inventoried housing units and lots that are left vacant or have not been awarded to beneficiaries in the National Capitol Region,



ALL ABOUT CHOICES

LUDWIG O. FEDERIGAN

Regions 3, 4 and 5 have been identified as possible evacuation. Nine mobile water treatment plants, 86 mobile water tanks, 61 storage tanks and 182 standby deep wells were also identified, while construction of additional water supply facilities would be made.

To ensure resiliency of critical infrastructure, the government enhanced design standards for government structures, assessed 5,980 critical government-owned structures, and continued the ongoing repairs, rehabilitation and retrofitting of the Estrella-Pantaleon, Binondo-Intramuros, Global City-Sta. Monica and Guadalupe links.

An EO institutionalizing the National Emergency Medical Service System would be released soon.

Paglilinis at Rehabilitasyon

The Boracay rehabilitation last year and the "battle for Manila Bay" launched early this year highlighted government's efforts on its cleanliness campaign.

On the Boracay rehabilitation, 40 commercial establishments have been issued with demolition and closure orders, while 17 local government officials were charged with gross neglect of duty. Water quality has improved, with the four sampling stations passing the coliform level except for Bolabog, while obstructions in Puka Beach have been dismantled and foreshore easement was largely recovered.

A total of P199.5 million worth of livelihood support grants and aids were provided to 31,009 beneficiaries.

Massive cleanup and rehabilitation were also embarked in prime tourist destinations such as Panglao Island in Bohol, El Nido in Palawan and Puerto Galera in Mindoro.

More than 10,000 Filipinos

marched during the launch of the battle for Manila Bay.

Initial desilting activities almost covered the 15-kilometer stretch from the Manila Yacht Club breakwater to the United States Embassy. About 225,000 cubic meters of silt were removed.

One hundred seventy-eight local government units and 5,714 *barangay* (villages) around Manila Bay were directed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government to conduct weekly cleanup drives of rivers and other water bodies within their respective communities. Thirty-two private firms have signed for the Enhanced Adopt-an-*Estero* Program. Partnerships with the Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. were strengthened for waste pollution reduction.

Over a period of three months, 316,949 commercial establishments were inspected. Six hundred notices of violation, 115 cease and desist orders and 23 closure orders were issued to noncompliant establishments for water pollution.

Pangangalaga ng likas yaman at kapaligiran

The care for the environment covers programs on enhanced national greening, coastal and marine environment, rehabilitation of mined-out areas, solid waste management, eco-tourism development, water quality, air quality and wildlife protection and conservation.

The highlights were:

Enhanced National Greening Program — Over 10 million seedlings were planted bringing to over 1.9 million hectares the total covered areas.

Coastal and Marine Environmental Management Program — Over 186,000 hectares of coastal habitats



■ The author with commissioners Rachel Herrera (center) and Alfred Anciado (second from right) of the Climate Change Commission.
DR. LUDWIG FEDERIGAN COLUMN



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Building climate - and disaster - resilient communities

were assessed and mapped to identify vulnerability to pressures and drivers; 218 biodiversity-friendly enterprises were supported to encourage economic developed within marine protected areas; and scientific expedition in the South China (West Philippine) Sea and Philippine (Benham) Rise were conducted.

Rehabilitation of mined-out areas — Over 10,000 hectares of denuded areas affected by mining operations were planted with bamboos.

Solid waste management program — Eighty-one open dumpsites were closed, 288 materials recovery facilities were constructed and 30 sanitary landfills were operationalized.

Eco-tourism development program — P158 million was generated from 58 eco-tourism sites that were being maintained.

Water quality management — Sixteen rivers nationwide were identified as most improved and 65 more estero were adopted bringing the total of 585 adopted estero nationwide.

Air quality management — Ambient air quality in highly urbanized cities have passed the guideline value on Particulate Matter 10, as recorded by 102 monitoring stations installed nationwide.

Wildlife protection — Six hundred forty-three animals were confiscated and retrieved.

Tibay ng imprastruktura

Over P440 billion of government funds were allocated to address flood management and mitigation, and rehabilitate various infrastructures to ensure their safety and resilience.

Big projects on flood management and mitigation include the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Development Phase 3 and 4, and Master Plan for Flood Management in Metro Manila and Surrounding Areas that

are worth P434 billion. Six more projects are included in the program.

Also, P4.88 billion was allocated to retrofit and increase the resilience of critical bridges like the Lambingan and Guadalupe Bridges.

Other projects include P3.77 million for the Henry T. Acmor Road in Natonin, Mountain Province; P472.62 million for 30 irrigation systems in Upper Pampanga River; P43.41 million for six barangay roads in Sasmuan, Pampanga; P52.28 million for four shore protection and drainage systems in Pulo Pandan, Negros Occidental; P699.99 million for three resettlement projects in Bicol Region; P15 million for Bobon Evacuation Center in Northern Samar; P150 million for Mother Mary Bailey Bridge in Biliran; P38.58 million for 11 farm-to-market roads in Tanauan, Leyte; and P123.48 million for Surigao Airport facilities.

All these data were provided by the government. How reliable these data are would translate to how some, if not all of, these programs and projects have impacted our lives, communities and society. It may not be felt very soon, but with our vigilance and active citizenship, we can draw our own individual conclusions whether or not our very own government has responded enough to make our communities disaster-proof and climate-resilient. Government is just a part of the equation, and our presence would complete the entire picture.

The author is the executive director of the Young Environmental Forum. He completed his climate change and development course at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom and executive program on sustainability leadership at Yale University in the United States. He may be emailed at ludwig.federigan@gmail.com.



STRATEGIC
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Unite vs climate change — Loren

DEPUTY Speaker Loren Legarda has reiterated her call to all sectors to act together in order to stop the worsening impact of climate change.

Legarda talked about her advocacy of addressing climate change before the leaders and experts of the ASEAN region during the ASEAN Ministerial Discussion on Clean Air, Health, and Climate.

Legarda is among the senators who crafted landmark environmental laws such as the Clean Air Act, Solid Waste Management Act, Renewable Energy Act, Climate Change Act, Clean Water Act, and Environmental Awareness Education Act, shared practical solutions to tackle climate change and air pollution.

"We have come to realize that in the face of climate and environmental crises, we cannot and should not stick to 'business as usual.' Actions to reduce short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) are now growing within and beyond the Climate and Clean Air Coalition," Legarda said.

"Science tells us that these early and scaled-up solutions will help us avoid 0.6°C of warming by 2050, while improving air quality and preventing premature deaths and crop damages annually. The Coalition has recommended the 25 Solutions for addressing air pollution and SLCPs in the region—I call on you to adopt these solutions and integrate them into our climate action plans," she added.

Jester P. Manalastas